

VZCZCXRO3063
RR RUEHAG RUEHCHI RUEHDF RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHIK RUEHLZ RUEHNH RUEHPOD
RUEHROV
DE RUEHBS #1459/01 1221109
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 021109Z MAY 07 ZDK
FM USEU BRUSSELS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEU/EU INTEREST COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 001459

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/ERA
DEPT FOR EUR/PGI

E.O 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [TBIO](#) [SOCI](#)

SUBJECT: SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE JOHN LANGE AND EU OFFICIALS
MEET ON AVIAN AND PANDEMIC INFLUENZA

¶1. (U) Summary. In his first official visit to Brussels since taking on his position in 2006, Ambassador John Lange, Special Representative on Avian and Pandemic Influenza, met with the European Commission on April 26th as part of the run-up to the next meeting of the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza (IPAPI) to be held in Delhi in December. In meetings with representatives of European Commission Directorates for External Relations, Health, Development, Research and EuropeAid, Lange discussed international efforts to overcome Indonesia's refusal to share virus samples with international health authorities and exchanged information on progress and plans for assistance to developing countries battling the spread of Avian Influenza (AI). The meetings were positive and productive, boding well for the Delhi IPAPI meeting later this year. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Ambassador Lange stressed a few key themes during a full day of meetings with European Commission officials and US Mission staff during his visit. First, he emphasized the importance of continued planning and preparation for a pandemic despite the decrease in front page news coverage. He noted repeatedly that we can never be completely ready for a pandemic. Referring to recent remarks in the press by a senior official of the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control that the EU would be ready for a pandemic in about two years, Lange said that such a statement was politically dangerous since we will never be able to fully anticipate the secondary effects of a pandemic nor are we ever likely to be completely ready for the anticipated death toll. Lange referenced the speech earlier in the week by Margaret Chan, Director of the World Health Organization, in which she said that expectations of three years ago -- that the H5N1 virus would soon either cause a pandemic or attenuate and cease to be a threat -- had not been fulfilled, shaking confidence in our ability to predict if and when this virus may become lethal. He also said that in the event the next pandemic fails to materialize in the near term, that the funding and expertise being directed to the virus today will not be wasted if it builds capacity in the developing world and emergency preparedness in all countries, including Europe and the US. Commission officials welcomed Ambassador Lange's remarks.

¶3. (SBU) At every meeting throughout the day, Ambassador Lange reported on recent efforts by WHO to overcome Indonesia's refusal to share samples of the virus. The Commission appeared not to be up-to-date on the situation,

believing that Indonesia had already recommenced providing samples. However, health Commissioner Kyprianou's Deputy Head of Cabinet, Philippe Brunet, aware of the situation, expressed concern about a possible domino effect should other countries follow Indonesia's example. Lange noted that Thailand's interventions at the April 25 WHO meeting in Geneva indicated that it may have retreated from such a move and rejoined the international community in its support for unconditional sharing of samples.

¶4. (U) Lange also reported that the US, as part of its intervention during the Geneva meeting, had offered to consider a contribution to a stockpile of pre-pandemic vaccine and asked whether the EU would consider joining such an effort. Both Jim Moran, Director Asia at the Directorate for External Relations (RELEX), and Alain Vandersmissen, RELEX's AI External Response Coordinator, quickly replied that the Commission did not favor this approach though it is unknown whether this position is shared by other Directorates. Moran immediately turned the discussion to Latin America, cutting off any further exchange on the subject. In response, Lange queried why AI is still being run out of the Asia office at RELEX. Moran and Vandersmissen explained that the Commission does not believe in setting up special offices in response to individual issues nor is there an equivalent office to that of the State Department's Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs. Because AI started in Asia, the Asia office initiated EU coverage of the issue and has since become the locus for AI and the coordinator of the interservice external response efforts. However, he added that the problem needs to be approached from a broader perspective, namely as part of a bigger picture which the Commission is calling HPED, Highly Pathogenic Agents and Emerging and Reemerging Diseases. Under this larger umbrella RELEX has succeeded in securing longer term

BRUSSELS 00001459 002 OF 002

support, what he called Qan eight-year line, Q for its work on AI.

¶5. (SBU) Concerning the Delhi IPAPI meeting, Moran of DG RELEX, stated that the question of whether to conduct another pledging exercise is still open. Vandersmissen remarked that some of the monies already donated had yet to be spent, a source of frustration for the Commission. Lange said that Congress has already approved an additional \$161 million for USAID for AI assistance but this is part of a complicated broader supplemental appropriation and final approval for such funds will take time. Regarding the Delhi meeting and IPAPI, RELEX and Lange agreed to propose the same approach that defused US-EU tensions prior to the Vienna Senior Officials meeting last year by having the IPAPI logo displayed in the upper left corner of the letterhead, above the title of the meeting, on both the invitation and the agenda.

¶6. (U) At a large interservice meeting with members of the Commission's AI Task Force, officials from the EuropeAid Cooperation Office reported that efforts by the EU and World Bank to disburse funds and advance third country national AI and pandemic planning efforts, though slow at first, are now well underway. Officials from other Directorates reported on plans for humanitarian relief in the event of a pandemic; technical trade assistance and training for countries that export food to the EU; and research on animal vaccines. As compared with a similar meeting last year with Lange's predecessor, Ambassador Nancy Powell, these working-level officials were more knowledgeable about their respective areas of competence and demonstrated a better grasp of the both the health and economic threats posed by a pandemic.

¶8. (U) During the meeting with Brunet, critical aspects of pandemic planning were discussed including business continuity. Brunet said that the Commission began by

making plans for continuity of its own and Member States government institutions and is now addressing the need to maintain important services for society at large. He gave the example of nuclear power plants which by law require a minimum level of staffing to remain operational. The closing of such facilities due to employee absences in a severe pandemic could cause disruption to power supplies. Ambassador Lange replied that such continuity of service concerns are driving the USG to take an all-hazards approach. Lange also described the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) recent development of community mitigation guidance which includes a pandemic severity index which would be used to match the level of response to a pandemic by its severity. Brunet was intrigued by this concept and said that representatives from DG SANCO will contact the CDC to learn more and determine whether using this approach would benefit the EU.

¶9. (SBU) Mission Comment. While the meetings showed many areas where the US and the EU share similar views, the two continue to act more in parallel than in harmony. Given the range of potential areas for coordinated action, the US should consider inviting the EU to identify specific activities which would benefit from joint efforts, possibly starting with coordinated activity in third countries of greatest concern such as Indonesia, Egypt and Nigeria. End Comment.

¶10. (U) This cable has been cleared by Ambassador Lange.

McKinley